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SUBJECT: LAVALAS PARTISANS PLAN ANTI-GOVERNMENT  
DEMONSTRATIONS FOR FEBRUARY 29

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) A Fanmi Lavalas Senate candidate reports Lavalas is planning anti-government protests on February 29, the four-year anniversary of Aristide's departure from Haiti. Organizers say they will assure the GOH the marches will be peaceful. The chosen protest theme of government inaction against economic hardship and the rising cost of living are potentially more politically lucrative for Lavalas than clamoring for Aristide's return. End summary.

¶2. (C) Former Deputy and current Lavalas Senate candidate for the South Department Francky Exeus reports that Fanmi Lavalas partisans have planned peaceful anti-government demonstrations on February 29. (Note: February 29, 2008 marks the fourth year of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's departure from Haiti; successive anniversaries have in the past occasioned demonstrations by Lavalas partisans. End note.) Exeus informed Poloff on February 8 that Lavalas expects 30,000 Lavalas partisans from the neighborhoods of Bel-Air, Martissant, La Plaine and Cite Soleil to march the streets of Port-au-Prince. Exeus claimed the protests will have three demands: the return of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; the inclusion of Fanmi Lavalas in the Preval administration; and concrete measures by the Preval government to address the rising cost of living.

¶3. (C) Exeus revealed that the partisans have drafted a letter to the Director General of the Haitian National Police (HNP) informing him that the planned demonstrations will be peaceful. They intended to deliver the letter on February 15. (Note: As of February 21, the letter had not been delivered to the HNP. Fanmi Lavalas Deputy Sorel Francois informed Poloff on February 21 that the Lavalas grass roots organizers changed the delivery date to forty-eight hours prior to the scheduled protests. End note.) Exeus stated that Fanmi Lavalas grass roots movements are organizing the protests, with no help from Fanmi Lavalas party leaders. He claimed that the party's grass roots organizations are more capable than the party itself of popular mobilization for political and economic causes. Exeus explained that the party nonetheless has thrown its support behind the protests as long as they remain peaceful and organized.

¶4. (C) Comment: The rallying cry for the return to Haiti of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, still the defining issue for Lavalas militants, is now joined by the protest theme of the increasing cost of living. Social and economic hardship caused by inflation and the continuing lack of jobs

are becoming a potent domestic issue for the Preval/Alexis administration. Protests around these issues have the potential to produce more political gain for Lavalas than marching for Aristide's return. Lavalas promise of protests over the past year, however, have fallen far short of party expectations. Post will carefully monitor the development of these planned protests. End comment.  
SANDERSON